

# The Missile Plains: Frontline of America's Cold War

*Historic Resource Study  
Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, South Dakota*

Prepared for  
United States Department of the Interior  
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Midwest Regional Office

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## List of Abbreviations

ABM	Antiballistic Missile Installations
AD	Air Division
Air Staff	Air Force Air Staff
ARDC	Air Research and Development Command
Army Corps	Army Corps of Engineers
BG	Bombardment Group
BMD	Ballistic Missile Division
BMW	Bombardment Missile Wing
BS	Bombardment Squadron
BW	Bombardment Wing
CEBMCO	Corps of Engineers Ballistic Missile Construction Office
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
Convair	Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation
DE	Declaration of Excess
EWO	Emergency War Order
FMMS	Field Missile Maintenance Squadron
GSA	General Service Administration
HF	high frequency
HICS	Hardened Intersite Cable System
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
IG	Inspector General
IMPSS	Improved Minuteman Physical Security System
ISST	ICBM Super-High-Frequency Satellite Terminal
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
LCC	Launch Control Center
LCF	Launch Control Facility
LF	Launch Facility
MALA	Missile Area Landowners Association
MP	Military Police
MPT	Missile Procedures Trainer
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPS	National Park Service
OMMS	Organizational Missile Maintenance Squadrons
ORI	Operational Readiness Inspections
RON	Remain-Over-Night
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SALT Treaty	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Treaty
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
SELM	Simulated Electronic Launch-Minuteman
SLBM	Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile
SLFCS	Survivable Low-Frequency Communication System
SMS	Strategic Missile Squadron
SMW	Strategic Missile Wing
START Treaty	Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms
TE	Transporter Erector
UHF	ultrahigh frequency
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USSTRATCOM	United States Strategic Command

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VHF	very high frequency
WADC	Wright Air Development Center
WDD	Western Development Division, extension of ARDC

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## Preface

The purpose of this study is to bring to light the history and context of Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. To achieve this goal, a number of individuals and organizations have generously shared their knowledge and resources. Our special thanks extend to the staff of the National Park Service, including project manager Ron Cockrell, Minuteman Missile National Historic Site Historian Sue Lamie, Badlands National Park Superintendent William R. Supernaugh, contract manager Ron Eilefson, Mary McVeigh and Dan Savage of the Denver Service Center, Historic American Engineering Record staff, and additional National Park Service staff that reviewed and commented on the study.

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This report was prepared under the direction of Dr. Jeffrey A. Engel, Principal Investigator. Christina Slattery of Mead & Hunt served as the project manager and primary author, with contributions from Mary Ebeling, Erin Pogany, and Amy R. Squitieri of Mead & Hunt. The report was also prepared with assistance from Emily Schill, Matthew Becker, and Victoria Redstone of Mead & Hunt.

*Cover photos: Launch Control Center construction photo from Peter Kiewit and Sons', Inc.; Aerial view of Delta-01 from Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Historic American Engineering Record, Reproduction Number HAER SD-50-A-1; Minuteman comes to South Dakota from "Site Activation Chronology, Minuteman Project, Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, July 1963-October 1963," K243.012-40, in USAF Collection, AFHRA; and Launch Control Center construction photo from National Park Service.*

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## Introduction

### Establishment and Purpose

In 1999 President Bill Clinton signed into law (Public Law 106-115) an Act of Congress providing for Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. Congress stated the purpose of the new park as follows:

To preserve, protect, and interpret for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the structures associated with the Minuteman II missile defense system;

1. to interpret the historical role of the Minuteman II missile defense system—
  - a. as a key component of America’s strategic commitment to preserve world peace; and
  - b. in the broader context of the Cold War; and
2. to complement the interpretive programs relating to the Minuteman II missile defense system offered by the South Dakota Air and Space Museum at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

To accomplish this purpose, the Secretary of the Interior was empowered to administer the site in accordance with the provisions of law generally applicable to units of the National Park System, including the establishing act of the National Park Service, approved 25 August 1916 (16 U.S.C. 1 et seq.) and the National Historic Sites Act of 21 August 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461 et seq.).

### Geographic Location

Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, historically a part of Ellsworth Air Force Base, consists of Minuteman II Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) Launch Control Facility (LCF) Delta-01 and Launch Facility (LF) Delta-09, located adjacent to Interstate 90 about fifty miles east-southeast of Rapid City, South Dakota. The LCF and the LF lie approximately ten miles apart. The Minuteman LCF Delta-01 site occupies an open, grassy tract of land on the west side of Jackson County Road CS 23A, approximately one-half mile north of Interstate 90, Exit 127. Minuteman LF Delta-09 site is located approximately ten miles west-northwest of LCF Delta-01. The LF Delta-09 occupies part of an open, grassy tract of land straddling Pennington County Road T512, about 0.6 miles west and south of Interstate 90, Exit 116. A visitor center will be the third component of Minuteman Missile National Historic Site and is planned to be located near Interstate Highway 90 and in proximity to the two historic sites.

### Significance of Minuteman Missile National Historic Site

Delta-01 and Delta-09 were part of the Minuteman I and II missile systems that once dotted the landscape of South Dakota, North Dakota, Missouri, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska. Minuteman III missiles remain in Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, Colorado, and Nebraska. For nearly thirty years these missiles and their facilities remained on continuous alert and served an important role in America’s triad of defense, including land-based ICBMs, submarine-launched missiles, and manned bombers. To deter Communist aggression, the United States developed Minuteman I with the ability to respond to an enemy attack with immediate and massive retaliation. In 1961 the Kennedy administration shifted the national policy to one of controlled response. The upcoming Minuteman II design was modified to allow for the launching of one or more missiles and providing a greater survival rate for the site with support facilities hardened belowground that were built to withstand the surface burst of a nuclear weapon. The first Minuteman II squadron went on alert in 1966 and in the following years Minuteman I facilities across

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the country were upgraded.

The Delta Flight Complex of Ellsworth Air Force Base, originally Minuteman I systems and updated in the early 1970s to Minuteman II, received new weapons, but the original structures were not modified and continued to represent the massive retaliation strategy of the early years of the Cold War. Facilities at other Minuteman deployment areas were configured or modified to implement the new controlled response strategy.

Minuteman II sites, with the exception of Delta-01 and Delta-09 of Ellsworth Air Force Base and Oscar-01 of Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, were destroyed or converted to Minuteman III sites in agreement with the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks Treaty. The remaining site on Whiteman Air Force Base, Oscar-01, is an underground Launch Control Center. Oscar-01 no longer has an associated LF and never included an aboveground LCF support building because it was supported by the surrounding base. Oscar-01 was originally constructed to reflect the later controlled response era of the Minuteman design with the construction of ground support facilities hardened (blast-proof) below ground.

Minuteman Missile National Historic Site is the only intact Minuteman II site remaining in the United States that contains an LCF and LF. Delta-01 and Delta-09 are also the only remaining intact examples that demonstrate the original Minuteman I configuration (modified to Minuteman II), designed to implement the Cold War policy of massive retaliation. Minuteman Missile National Historic Site provides the opportunity to interpret the Cold War and the role of the Minuteman missile defense system and what it meant to work with the missiles and live near the sites.

## **Organization of the Historic Resource Study**

To assist in the interpretation and understanding of the cultural, political, social, and economic history of Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, the Historic Resource Study is divided into three main sections.

*Section I – The Cold War and National Armament* will provide the global and national context for Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. Chapter 1 of Section 1, the history of the Cold War, focusing on the 1950s and 1960s, will describe how nuclear systems developed. This chapter will also focus on the political climate and foreign policy decisions of Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy and how these factors affected development of strategic missiles and nuclear armament systems. Chapter 2 will provide a background on ICBM program beginnings and liquid-fuel ICBMs, placing the development of solid-fuel ICBMs into context. Chapter 3 will discuss development and capabilities of both the Minuteman I and Minuteman II missile systems and provide an overview of the development of Minuteman III and the future generation of missile development.

*Section II – Life on the South Dakota Plains: Before, During, and After Minuteman* will present the history of the Minuteman missile in South Dakota in five chapters. Chapter 1 will provide a brief overview of the prehistory and history of the region discussing Native American history, land speculation and settlement, and continued agricultural uses. This background will describe the landscape and environment prior to the establishment of 150 Minuteman I and II LFs and fifteen LCFs throughout the state.

Chapters 2 to 5 will continue to discuss the development, construction, and activities of the missile sites in South Dakota from the 1960s through the 1980s when the sites were still active, with an emphasis on LCF Delta-01 and LF Delta-09. A history of the U.S. Air Force highlighting the Strategic Air Command and Ellsworth Air Force Base in Chapter 2 will provide the background for a discussion of the 44<sup>th</sup> Strategic Missile Wing, which commanded the Minuteman sites in South Dakota. Chapter 3 will provide the history of the location, land purchase, and construction of the Minuteman sites in South Dakota. This chapter will also discuss both immediate economic and social impacts to the region, as well as the effects over the years. The location and features of Delta-01 and Delta-09 will be described and illustrated in Chapter 4. Section II will continue with a discussion of the day-to-day activities of the personnel assigned to the

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missile sites in Chapter 5. This discussion will include the training, roles, and responsibilities of the missile combat crew, facility manager, security and maintenance personnel, and the cook. Section II will conclude by addressing changes in the roles, responsibilities, and personnel at the sites during the Minuteman's tenure, including the introduction of female missileers and addressing racial issues among personnel at the sites and within the greater community.

*Section III – Peace Movement, Nuclear Disarmament, and the Future* will return to the national and international arenas discussing the opposition to nuclear armament, the end of the Cold War, and the future for Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. The national peace movement discussion in Chapter 1 will feature regional protests conducted at the missile sites. Chapter 2 will focus on nuclear arms treaties, including the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks Treaty and the deactivation of the Minuteman sites. The deactivation discussion will focus on the sites in South Dakota, including landowner issues, the inactivation of the 44<sup>th</sup> Strategic Missile Wing, and the opportunity to retain Delta-01 and Delta-09 for interpretive purposes. Chapter 3 will highlight the process to establish Minuteman Missile National Historic Site and the cooperation between the U.S. Air Force and the National Park Service towards this effort.

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